



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES



## Dead Bird Handling Instructions

**Please call the Department of Health and Human Services  
West Nile Virus Information Line, 1-866-273-6453 prior to the collection of  
any dead bird since we will not test *every* dead bird reported.**

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) will collect only a sample of the dead birds reported during the West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) season. As the season progresses, discontinuation of bird sampling will occur rapidly once the presence of the virus has clearly been demonstrated in a community or county.

While the DHHS is interested in collecting information about dead birds as part of our efforts to understand the movement of WNV and EEE, only a limited number of birds will actually be tested due to targeting our testing efforts to establish the presence of these viruses in NH communities, as well as limitations in collection and delivery of the specimens.

Monitoring dead bird sightings within NH could indicate the presence of WNV or EEE, although not every dead bird found will be related to these infections. The viruses can be isolated only from relatively fresh carcasses found in the first 24 hours after dying. Remember, not every dead bird will be infected and not every dead bird is valuable for testing.

### **What should you do if you find a dead bird?**

If you find one or more dead bird(s), call your local animal control officer, health officer, their designated representative or in their absence, call the WNV Information Line, 1-866-273-6453. You will be asked questions about the bird's condition in order to determine if it is a potentially viable specimen for testing, and if your community has the ability to transport the specimen. You will be given instructions on how the bird should be processed. If you are calling the info line after hours, leave a message including your name and telephone number. You will receive a return call within a short period of time. **Please do not deliver birds without prior authorization.**

If you know the bird has been dead for more than 24 hours, please inform us. Although it will not be testable, we will use your report to help determine if more intensive surveillance efforts are needed in your area.

In the event DHHS staff have determined the bird is a suitable specimen for testing, it will be important to provide the following information to the official who is picking up the bird, if there is a collection and pick-up procedure in place:

1. Species of bird (if known)
2. Date and Time found or first noticed
3. City or Town where the bird was found
4. Street address or closest physical address where the bird was found
5. Your name and telephone number

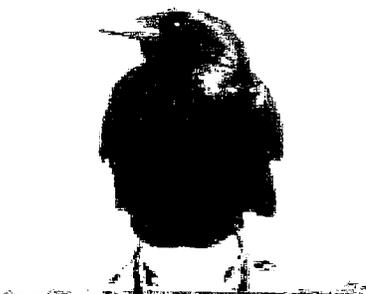
### **How should a dead bird be collected?**

WNV and EEE have never been known to spread directly from birds to people, however dead birds and all dead animals must not be handled with bare hands.

1. Use waterproof gloves when handling a dead bird. If you don't have gloves, insert your hand into a plastic bag, grasp the bird carefully and invert the bag over the bird.
2. Each bird should be double-bagged. Place each bird in a separate sealed leak-proof plastic bag, then place each bird inside a second sealed bag. See-through zipper lock style plastic bags are recommended.
3. If possible, refrigerate the bird immediately in an insulated container with freezer packs or in a refrigerator not used for food, or place ice packs on top of the bird and invert a pail over it, weighted down to avoid being dislodged, until the bird can be picked up.
4. Attach the intake form (see the Bird Intake Form) or a piece of paper to each bag with the following information:
  - a. Species (if known)
  - b. Date collected
  - c. Location where bird was found (town/street/address, etc.)
  - d. Name, address and phone number of reporting individual
  - e. Include any additional relevant information on the back of the form
5. Transport the bird at refrigeration temperature to either the NH Public Health Laboratories in Concord or the NH Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at UNH in Durham within 24 hours or as soon as possible.

**Descriptions of Birds Eligible for Testing:**

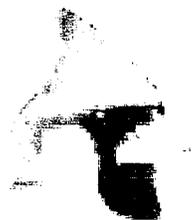
**June 1 – October 31, 2005**

<p><u>CROW</u></p>  A black and white illustration of a crow perched on a branch, facing left. The crow has a dark, sleek body with a slightly lighter patch on its neck.	<p>Adult crows are about 17 to 21 inches in length, while juvenile crows are about 10 inches in length. They are completely black and have a purplish gleam in strong sunlight. The tail is fan-shaped, the bill and feet are black.</p>
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**June 1 – October 31, 2005**

<p><u>BLUE JAY</u></p>  A black and white illustration of a blue jay perched on a branch, facing right. The bird has a prominent crest and a dark "necklace" around its throat.	<p>The blue jay is between 9 and 12 inches long. It is bright blue on top and white to gray on its throat, chest and belly. It has a gray-blue crest on its head and black and white bars on its wings and tail. Its bill, legs and feet are black. It also has a black "necklace" on its lower throat.</p>
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**August 1 – October 31, 2005**

<p><u>NORTHERN CARDINAL</u></p>  A black and white illustration of a northern cardinal perched on a branch, facing left. The bird has a large, upright crest and a thick, conical bill.	<p>The northern cardinal is between 8 and 9 inches long with a conspicuous crest and a cone-shaped reddish bill. Males are red overall, with a black face. Females are buffy-brown or buffy-olive tinged with red on wings, crest and tail.</p>
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August 1 – October 31, 2005

<u>HOUSE FINCH</u>	The house finch is sparrow-sized measuring 5-5 ¾ inches in length. The male has orange-red coloration on the crown, breast and rump with brown streaked flanks. The female has plain, unstriped head and heavy streaking on a light underside.
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August 1 – October 31, 2005

<u>EUROPEAN STARLING</u>	European starlings are small back birds with an iridescent green and purple gloss on their feathers. The tips of the feathers are cream colored and create a “flecking” effect. Both male and females grow to a length of about 8½ inches. In flight, starlings show a short square tail.
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For more information, or for bird test results see the NH West Nile Virus Website  
at or  
call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services,  
West Nile Virus Info line at  
1-866-273-NILE (6453)

For health care providers with clinical questions  
or to report human suspect or probable cases  
please contact the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at  
1-800-852-3345 ext. 4496 or  
1-603-271-4496